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SUBJECT: CSU PARTY CONVENTION USHERS-IN POST-STOIBER ERA

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REFS: (A) MUNICH 403, (B) MUNICH 28

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SUMMARY  
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¶11. (SBU) At the annual CSU party convention, Erwin Huber decisively defeated Horst Seehofer and Gabrielle Pauli in the race to lead his party forward. Delegates also overwhelmingly endorsed Guenther Beckstein as the CSU's candidate for Bavarian Minister-President, all but ensuring his election on October 9. Chancellor Merkel praised the achievements of outgoing CSU Party Chairman and Minister-President Edmund Stoiber, while expressing optimism about her future working relationship with Stoiber's successors. Merkel's optimism may be well-grounded, as both of Stoiber's successors, while keeping "Bavaria first," will likely forge a closer working relationship with the coalition government in Berlin than did Stoiber.

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THE STOIBER ERA DRAWS TO A CLOSE  
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¶12. (U) As expected, Bavaria's Christian Social Union (CSU) celebrated its annual party convention September 28-29 with the election of Bavarian Economic Minister Erwin Huber to succeed Edmund Stoiber as the party's Chairman with 58 percent of delegates. Huber's main rival for the party chief job, Federal Agriculture Minister Horst Seehofer, came in second with 39 percent of the vote, but was re-elected as one of four Deputy Party Chairmen, receiving the support of 92 percent of the delegates. The other deputy chairmen elected were: Beate Merk, Bavarian Justice Minister; Dr. Ingo Friedrich, Member of the Presidium of the European Parliament; and Barbara Stamm, Vice President of the Bavarian Landtag (state legislature). Taking a conciliatory tone, Huber emphasized Seehofer's importance to the party, and noted "the CSU's collective intelligence."

¶13. (U) Coming in third in the race for party boss was the controversial District Administrator from Fuerth, Gabriele Pauli, winning only 24 out of 959 delegates. Already a long-shot candidate for the Party Chairman job, Pauli's history of seeking the spotlight in unpopular and sometimes bizarre ways appears to have sealed her fate. Pauli's blistering internet attacks on Stoiber, her posing in latex as a "dominatrix" for "Park Avenue" magazine, and her recent proposal that marriages expire after only seven years unless renewed (an idea the newspaper "Handelsblatt" compared to making Islam the state religion of Catholic Bavaria) have left many wondering aloud if she wouldn't feel more at home in a party other than the socially conservative CSU.

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BECKSTEIN A STEP CLOSER TO MINISTER-PRESIDENT'S CHAIR  
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**¶4.** (U) In addition to electing new party leadership, the CSU delegates also designated Bavarian Interior Minister Guenther Beckstein as the CSU's candidate for Minister-President with 97 percent of the vote, effectively guaranteeing he will succeed Edmund Stoiber in the State Chancellery. Stoiber, who had occupied both the Party Chairman and Minister-President positions simultaneously, officially resigned as Minister-President effective September 30, although he will remain "acting" Minister-President until his successor is elected by the Bavarian Landtag on October 9. This will be the first time in history both the CSU Party Chairman and Minister-President positions will be held by two state-level politicians.

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CHANCELLOR FAREWELLS STOIBER, EMBRACES HUBER  
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**¶5.** (U) Giving the keynote address at the convention, German Chancellor Angela Merkel saluted the departing Edmund Stoiber on his 66th birthday, saying Germany could learn from Bavaria's accomplishments under Stoiber, while she also made a few light-hearted jabs acknowledging the frequently strained relationship between the two leaders. "It would be wrong to say the time we have spent together has always been entirely harmonious," she said, adding "Things have not always been easy with you." She noted she had been "a bit disappointed" to read how Stoiber had invited former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder to his private residence in Wolfratshausen recently, "because our breakfast in Wolfratshausen seemed rather unique to me - and now I am no longer sure."

**¶6.** (U) In her speech, Merkel confirmed she would defend the CSU's demand for an increase in nursery care for children under three years of age, and announced that she would commit herself to the

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implementation of the "Transrapid" maglev train project between the Munich airport and central train station (Note: This has been one of Huber's top priorities as Economic Minister). She said a technology that had been invented in Germany should also be applied there -- or else, it would not find a "broad market." Following Huber's election as CSU chief, Merkel, issued a statement saying she looked forward to "trusting and constructive cooperation" with Huber and wished him "strength, the right touch, and God's blessing" in his new office. The CDU welcomes a "strong and united CSU sister party" at its side, Merkel added, noting that together the CDU-CSU will succeed in "addressing challenges, exploiting opportunities, and shaping a successful policy for the people in our country."

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STAYING THE COURSE  
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**¶7.** (U) Both Beckstein and Huber made it clear they do not harbor a radical agenda for the CSU or Bavaria. Huber said there was no need of "reinventing the CSU," and told journalists that he will offer the "same steadfastness and stubbornness" as his predecessor when looking out for Bavarian interests. As a Lower Bavarian, he might even be a bit "more obstinate" than Stoiber, he noted. Huber also announced he will travel to Berlin more often than Stoiber, saying his goal is a "clear Berlin presence." Huber has also previously stated he would be interested in a federal position in Berlin following the 2009 Bundestag elections.

**¶8.** (U) Beckstein said he intends to administer Stoiber's heritage, while at the same time leaving his own mark. Indications are that Beckstein will focus more on issues such as climate protection and integration of immigrants than did Stoiber. Another area where there may be some daylight between Beckstein and his predecessor is in Bavaria's relations with its neighbors. Beckstein's acceptance of an invitation to meet with Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek three weeks ago, despite the thorny issue of Bavaria's large population of Sudeten Germans, was something Stoiber was unwilling to do. Both Beckstein (63) and Huber (61) will also face the challenge of cultivating the next generation of party and government

leadership, given they themselves represent Stoiber's generation.

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COMMENT  
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¶9. (SBU) While three candidates for Party Chairman might have made this year's CSU convention unusual, there were few surprises that came out of the event. More than anything, the convention symbolizes a fresh start following the tenure of Edmund Stoiber at the helm of Bavaria and the CSU. Huber and Beckstein will likely "tinker around the edges," of policy, but are unlikely to take Bavaria in a substantially different direction from the status quo, which most Bavarians feel has brought them prosperity and an enviable quality of life. The biggest difference may be felt in Berlin. Huber's comments about a "clear Berlin presence," and Beckstein's history of pragmatic dealings with opposition and coalition leaders at the federal level (Ref B) suggests Chancellor Merkel may have the most to gain from the new team in Bayern.

¶10. (U) This report has been coordinated with Embassy Berlin.

¶11. (U) Previous reporting from Munich is available on our SIPRNET website at [www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/munich/](http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/munich/) .

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